

Behavioral Health Commission Family Search and Engagement “Family Finding”



***Armando Ontiveros
Regional Executive Director
Inland Empire Region
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1:00 P.M.***



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The American Family



Nearly all American children grow up with their parents, relatives or others who love them without child welfare agency involvement.



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- The American Red Cross identifies the following essential needs for children: food, shelter, medical care, and family connections
- Family connections are an essential part of a healthy life!



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History

- In 1974 Catholic Community Services of Western Washington began its Family Finding efforts to explore and develop innovative approaches promoting safety, stabilization, well being and permanency
- They started with “Homebuilders” for youth at risk of out of home placement and in 1990 their “Wraparound” approach, was funded
- Homebuilders evolved into Wraparound.
- EMQFF brought Wraparound to California in 2001 and to San Bernardino in 2006.



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Family Finding Is

- A structured process to address the permanency needs of youth in the system
- A process that is carried out in full partnership with the department of Social services
- Includes not only finding the family but the more complex process of engaging the family
- Is supported by programs such a Wraparound and other family support modalities.



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EMQ Families First Goal

- Family Finding helps create permanent, supportive relationships for foster youth who have lost family connections. Family Finding efforts across the agency work with youth of all ages in Wraparound and other EMQ Families First programs to identify, find and engage biological and other relatives who can become permanently invested in the well-being of the child. (Statewide)



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Agency Vision

- All EMQ Families First staff have a basic understanding of Family Finding and have attended an overview of the process and the goals
- All EMQ Families First Programs determine the best use of Family Finding to promote community connections for resiliency and to make sure that children are in permanent loving families rather than in the “system”!



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Interventions

Interventions include an extensive search of the file using the “cold case” technique, interviews with available family and foster family members and the use of state of the art Internet search technology, to locate, engage and develop relationships with healthy adults who can offer support and love throughout the child’s lifetime.



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Connectedness = a better life

- *Children gain permanence, identity, and a true belief that they belong*
- *Once they know who they are and who cares about them, we see improvements in behaviors, ultimately increasing safety and stabilizing placement*



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Outcomes

- *Children experience permanent, loving, and stable kin relationships*
- *Children avoid the disruption, chaos, and rejection that result from multiple placement*
- *The average time to place a child using Family Finding is 6 months to a year, compared to years of multiple placements in the child welfare system*



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Why Do This?

- *Children and the systems who care for them simply cannot afford the costs or consequences of raising them in stranger care when they had a fit and willing relative who could have loved and cared for them*
- *Children who are away from family are less likely to have a stable place to live*
- *50 percent of children placed in foster care have multiple placements (National Center for Policy Analysis, 2001).*



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Research

Research proves that lifelong, loving connections are the single most significant predictor of future success for children in the child welfare system and Family Finding is one significant means of helping to make those connections.



- Family Works! Of the 71 million children in the US: 98% are living at home with relatives; only 2% live in foster care or other institutions
- At EMQ Families First we believe that all children can have the benefits of permanency, community connections, resiliency and family!



- EMQ Families First believes that the only way a child can achieve “permanence” and long lasting stability is by having contact with his or her family
- Permanency does not always mean placement with a family, but experience has shown that placement does occur due to the reconnection.



**Thank you
for your commitment to
Family Finding**

**For further information contact us at
emqff.org**



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